



Testimony by the Connecticut State Medical Society

Senate Bill 1077

An Act Concerning the Acceptance of Physicians of Patients Who are Medicaid Recipients

Public Health Committee

March 6, 2023

Senator Anwar, Representative McCarthy Vahey, Senator Kushner, Senator Marx, Representative Parker, Senator Somers, Representative Klarides-Ditria and distinguished members of Public Health Committee, on behalf of the physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bill 1077: **An Act Concerning the Acceptance of Physicians of Patients Who are Medicaid Recipients.**

CSMS supports the intent of this bill. Connecticut's Medicaid physician network is not adequate to provide coverage to the current population of enrollees. Wait times to see a specialist are long, primary care is scarce and mental health care is nearly impossible to obtain. We don't believe that a study is truly necessary to understand the reason that physicians in Connecticut are not accepting Medicaid patients. The simple answer is that to achieve a more robust Medicaid physician network, there must be an increase in physician payment rates. Many physician specialties have not seen an increase in Medicaid payment rates in well over a decade. This is leading to more physicians dropping out of the Medicaid network and new physicians not enrolling in the network. Physicians want to provide medical care to *all* patients, but they must be equipped with the tools to do so. Many physician offices are small businesses and current Medicaid payment rates are, quite often, less than the cost of care.

Medicaid payment rates are often compared to Medicare payment rates in a Medicaid-to-Medicare Fee Index. According to a study done by the Kaiser family foundation, overall, Connecticut ranks 30th in the Medicaid-to-Medicare Fee Index. When further differentiated, Connecticut is near the bottom of all states, ranking 42nd, for all services other than Primary Care and Obstetrics/Gynecology services.

During the 2023 legislative session, a proposal to increase Medicaid rates to 100% of Medicare has been discussed. While we support the concept of a working group proposed in this bill, the reality is that working group recommendations have not been adhered to in this State. One only needs to look at the work done by the High Deductible Task Force in 2018 and 2019 to see that none of their recommendations to date have been proposed as legislation. It is frustrating to workgroup members who take time away from their profession to see little to no results from their

efforts. In addition, the reality is that Connecticut **cannot wait** for the results of this workgroup to begin to increase Medicaid payment rates. The status quo cannot remain any longer. Physicians are leaving the Medicaid network in droves and patients are unable to access needed care. If a workgroup is convened, it should be done **concurrent** with a raise in Medicaid payment rates.

CSMS supports Section 2 of this Bill which would grant immunity to physicians providing health care services to a patient who is a Medicaid recipient. While this may not be enough to overcome the hurdle of inadequate Medicaid payment rates, it would certainly be a step in the right direction to creating a more robust physician network for Medicaid recipients.

CSMS looks forward to working with this Committee, and all members of the General Assembly, on our effort to increase Medicaid physician payment rates so that Connecticut's physicians can provide timely and quality care to Connecticut's most vulnerable patients.